

REMARKS

As previously noted, the Office Action sets forth numerous rejections, set forth below:

I. Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 11-13, 17, 19 and 27-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Hiraishi et al.** (JP 11-355562) (hereinafter "**Hiraishi**") in view of **Funada et al.** (JP 5-14706) (hereinafter "**Funada**").

II. Claims 4, 14-16 and 34-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Hiraishi** in view of **Funada** and **Takagi** (JP 5-282448).

III. Claims 7, 9-10, 18 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Hiraishi** in view of **Funada** and **Ishii** (JP 2-073284).

IV. Claims 21-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Hiraishi** in view of **Funada** and **Omura** (JP 4-03120561A).

V. Claims 30-33 and 36-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Hiraishi** in view of **Funada** and **Ugai** (JP 4-06125459A).

Each of the above rejections is traversed on the grounds that **Hiraishi** does not constitute prior art. **Hiraishi** was filed in Japan on June 4, 1989, and then published under Japanese laid-open publication No. 11-355562 on December 24, 1999. The present invention, on the other hand, claims a priority date of February 26, 1999. Thus, the present application has a priority date that predates the publication date of **Hiraishi**. Stated differently, **Hiraishi** is not available as a prior art reference under any of 35 U.S.C. § 102(a)(see, e.g., MPEP § 2132), 102(b) (see, e.g., MPEP § 2133), 102(d) (see, e.g., MPEP § 2135), or 102(e) (see, e.g., MPEP § 2136) or 35 U.S.C. § 103 (see, e.g., MPEP § 2141.01).

Therefore, each of the above rejections are legally insufficient in that the principal reference (i.e., **Hiraishi**) in each of the above rejections does not constitute prior art and the remaining combinations of references in each of the above rejections are factually and legally insufficient to teach or suggest each aspect of the claimed inventions and to sustain the asserted obviousness rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Applicants hereby submit certified translations of the priority documents to thereby perfect priority.

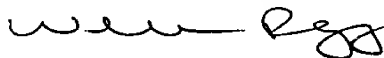
Withdrawal of each of the above-noted rejections I-V is therefore requested for at least this reason.

Allowance of all of the pending claims is therefore requested.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit excess fees to such account.

Respectfully submitted,

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